

Millfield School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Paul Clark
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Millfield is an independent school, registered as a charity and providing co-educational facilities for 780 boys and 480 girls. Boarding for 950 pupils is provided in 19 houses, three of which are off-site. The majority of houses on-site are purpose built. The activities of the school are overseen by a board of governors.

The school caters for young people aged 13-18. The main intakes are at 13 and 16.

The aim of the school is to ensure that each individual is given every possible encouragement and opportunity to discover and realise their talents and leave prepared to face the challenges of modern life. The school is particularly renowned for its success in the area of sporting development.

The school welcomes overseas students who comprise approximately 16% of the school roll. There is an English Language Studies Department devoted to providing support to overseas students.

The school has an identified head of pastoral care who oversees the boarding function of the school.

Summary

This announced inspection of the boarding arrangements at Millfield School found that the young people enjoy a comfortable level of care within living accommodation maintained to a high standard and with an abundance of leisure and recreational activities on offer. Staff are well trained and dedicated to the care of the young people. Although recording is generally good, there needs to be more consistency in boarding house practice in this regard.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The Commission for Social Care Inspection in September 2006 made seven recommendations, all of which have now been met. These included: the arrangements for the storage and recording of prescribed and homely medication and the self medication arrangements for boarders; the policy on action to be taken in the event of a boarder going missing; improvement of staff reference checks; food hygiene training for boarding house staff; and the fitting of window restrictors in boarding house bedrooms.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The school takes numerous steps to ensure that the health of young people is promoted. All house parents, boarding house staff, and teachers/students responsible for overseeing sporting activities are trained in first aid and this training is regularly updated. There are well-stocked first aid boxes in each boarding house and in all key areas of the school and sporting areas, and an effective electronic monitoring system is in place to ensure that the content of these boxes is kept to an optimum level. Specialist first aid equipment is always in place in the more

remote sporting areas of the school. Medical services are always on hand during formal weekend and evening sporting events.

Parents are asked to provide the school with the health history of the child placed and a signed agreement to allow the school to access emergency medical treatment for a boarder. Not all parents had signed and returned these agreements in spite of the school having asked for them several times.

The school has a medical centre maintained by full time trained nurses both by day and night. The centre has a sufficient number of bedrooms to accommodate ailing children. Young people have a choice of seeing either a male or female General Practitioner (GP). A male GP conducts a daily surgery and a female GP conducts a weekly surgery. Older boarders may make their own arrangements to make GP appointments. Younger children cannot freely present themselves to the medical centre and they require a chit from a member of staff to access the medical service from the centre.

Boarding house staff correctly store, administer and record the giving of medication. It was noted that in one boarding house the record book of medication administration was left in an open area where it might have been viewed by young people. The boarding house staff do not inform the medical centre if they administer pain relieving or household medication. The nursing staff are currently looking at ways that this information can be exchanged electronically. Older boarders may self administer their own medication.

Although the welfare needs of individual boarders are well known to the head of boarding and boarding house staff, and are subject to regular review and discussion, the provision of a written 'welfare plan' for those young people with special welfare needs is not in place.

Bed linen is changed weekly or as frequently as necessary. Each boarding house has its own laundry facilities. The school also has its own central laundry service. Boarders reported that few clothing items go missing as a result of using the school's laundry service. Older boarders may use the facilities available within the boarding house to do their own laundry should they chose to do so.

The school has outsourced its catering service. The menu plan indicated that a diverse, varied and nutritious diet is provided. The school menu provides choice and the opportunity for young people to experience international cuisine. Food sampled was of a good standard. Children commented that the standard of food provided was generally good. Facilities are in place in each boarding house for the provision of evening snacks. Environmental health officers from the local authority have recently inspected the kitchen facilities and found them to be of an excellent standard. The chef liaises with the cooks in the more remote boarding houses to ensure the good quality of food provided there. Catering staff have been trained in the application of epi-pens to attend to children who may suffer adverse reactions to foods.

A personal, health and social education programme includes advice and information on general and sexual health and staying safe for all pupils. The medical centre staff will also provide advice on sexual health, smoking cessation and countering drug use.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

All boarding houses and school buildings are protected by entry key codes which are changed regularly. Day pupils may enter boarding houses (but not bedrooms) with staff permission. External areas of the school are monitored by closed circuit television over a 24 hour period. The school employs a number of fulltime security staff to oversee security at the school. Older boarders may 'sleep-over' with the families of day pupils with written parental permission.

The school employs maintenance staff to ensure that all parts of the building are safe and in good order. Risk assessments are in place for any high risk activities and any areas of safety concern. These are updated on an annual basis.

The school has an online accident reporting system which details the accident occurring; this is monitored by the designated health and safety officer and reported to a health and safety committee.

Staff working in the boarding houses receive training in fire safety. There are records of fire drills, alarm tests and equipment maintenance kept in each boarding house. However, in some boarding houses alarm checks are not always done on a weekly basis. Also, records of fire evacuation drills do not always record the time of day they occur or the time taken to evacuate. In one house there was no record of any fire drills having taken place. In some houses evacuations during night time hours had not taken place.

The school has a child protection policy which is available to staff in both written and electronic form and there is online access to the Local Safeguarding Children Board policy and procedure. A slight amendment to the policy was identified at a recent inspection of the preparatory school and this is currently being addressed by the designated child protection officer. All staff, including domiciliary staff, receive both induction and full day training in the area of child protection and this is appropriately updated. There is a designated child protection officer and deputy to whom all staff will refer any disclosure of safeguarding concern. Both have received multi-agency training in child protection provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. All staff are provided with a range of informative material including a laminated card, which details action to be taken in the event of a disclosure of child abuse and the contact details of the child protection officers.

The school has a written policy on action to be taken in the event of a child going missing. The school has recently reviewed and updated its written policy on dealing with bullying. Low concerns about bullying were evident from conversations with boarders and from boarders' questionnaire survey returns. The school have been proactive in addressing some concerns about 'banter' which a significant number of the young women commented on. Young people are given a laminated card with advice on what to do if they feel they are being bullied. Shower and bathing changing facilities in the boarding houses have suitable arrangements which ensure that children have privacy when changing.

There is a clearly written complaints policy which details the school's procedure. A record is kept of complaints received and the actions taken by the school. These appear to have been appropriate. The guidance documentation given to boarders and parents on making a complaint does not advise them of their right to make representation directly to Ofsted.

The school has a written behaviour policy which sets out expectations of behaviour and sanctions that will be taken if these are breached. This policy is monitored by the deputy headteacher.

The deputy headteacher maintains a written record of all major punishments applied and monitors this on a termly basis. Not all boarding houses keep a record book of sanctions applied as a result of minor misdemeanours and therefore no monitoring is in place for this other than by informal discussion between boarding house staff and the head of boarding.

The school has opted not to provide staff with training in particular methods of physical restraint. There is a written policy on the use of physical restraint contained within the staff handbook. Young people spoken to felt that disciplinary methods applied were fair and equitable. Prefects support staff in the care of younger pupils but do not have the power to administer discipline or sanctions. However, their duties and responsibilities are not clearly stated in writing.

The school maintains a single central record which details all staff personnel recruitment and vetting enquiries that have been carried out. The school reviewed its procedure in November 2009. All members of staff households who live in the campus are subject to Criminal Records Bureau checks. There is no arrangement in place to ensure that the school has a written agreement in place with adults not employed by the school but living in the same building as boarding accommodation.

The school maintains a fleet of 24 minibuses and one multi-passenger vehicle for the transportation of young people to outside events. All vehicles are serviced annually and they are safety checked by designated personnel on a daily basis. All staff who drive the minibuses have to pass a test of driving competence and make a check on the safety of the vehicle they are driving. Their driving licences are seen by the school who check on the status of the licence. All drivers have to inform the school if they accrue penalty points, convictions or acquire a medical condition that may affect their driving ability.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have access to a wide range of activities and leisure pursuits during evenings and weekends, and activity plans are in place in each boarding house. The school has a wealth of sporting activities that boarders can access. These include a dance and movement studio, a tartan track athletics stadium, a fully equipped weights room and a gymnasium, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, hockey and tennis courts with an artificial turf surface, and an equestrian centre where horse owners can stable their own horse/pony or use the school's horses or ponies. There are also facilities within the campus which can be used during the evenings and weekends for musical and artistic pursuits.

Although some of the sporting facilities are some distance from the main school campus, staff are provided with mobile phones and appropriate first aid resources. All staff supervising sporting activities are trained in first aid, and trained lifeguards oversee the pool. Younger pupils use the weights room under supervision. Older pupils have to undergo tests of competence in using the equipment and must not work out in the room alone.

Although the school has a strong ethos in sporting achievement, boarders spoken to did not feel pressurized into achieving above their capabilities and can enjoy competitive or individual sporting activity on their own terms. Sports teachers spoken to demonstrated a sound awareness of the risk potential associated with the pressures relating to expectations of high achievement.

The boarding houses all contain a wide range of educational and leisure facilities such as wide screen television and DVD, books, games, puzzles, pool tables and table football. The external areas around the boarding houses are all pleasantly maintained.

Each boarder's bedroom has study facilities. There are study areas in each boarding house where boarders can access the internet through suitably safeguarded sites. Each boarder has a school email address and can contact home via this facility. Each boarding house has phone booths which boarders can use and which are situated in a manner that provides privacy. It was noted that within each booth there were information posters which give the contact details of national agencies who support children.

School information documents advise boarders where they can access personal support. The school has a counselling service staffed by professionally qualified counsellors. Personal tutors and house parents are also available for first line support and the raising of concerns. All boarders spoken to felt that they would be able to discuss areas of personal concern with the school counsellors in complete confidence.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Each boarding house has a boarder who is elected as the head of house who represents the views of the other boarders within that house and feeds them back to the house management group. There are regular house meetings. There is a house representative at the school council meetings which are held each term. Comments received from boarders suggested that they did not feel the school council was an effective forum to express their views. However, it was noted that changes have been made to boarders' access to the town centre as a result of the council meetings. There is a suggestions box in the dining room where comments can be made on the quality of food.

Overseas boarders felt well integrated and in general new boarders are well inducted into their boarding houses. All boarders spoken to have a good relationship with boarding house staff and the inspectors felt confident that boarders would readily go to them if they had concerns or needed help or advice. As previously stated, there is also a counselling service which boarders may access.

Most boarders have mobile phones on which they can communicate with their parents. Rules of usage are in place for mobile phones during the school day; these rules appear appropriate. As previously stated, there are also private telephone booths which boarders may use.

Boarders can use the school's safeguarded internet access to email their families. The school's information documentation provides young people with information about the boarding provision.

All boarders can visit Street on weekends subject to parental permission and the school's curfew requirements. Older boarders may have 'sleepovers' in the homes of day pupils with written parental permission.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Entrances to each of the boarding houses are key code protected and these codes are changed regularly. There is closed circuit television security in many areas around the school. The school employs a number of security officers to oversee the security of the campus.

Boarders have a lockable facility within their rooms where they may keep personal possessions. They may also leave monies or valuables with the house parents who will keep this under secure conditions. There is a recording system in place for this. Each boarding house keeps a supply of 'tuck' which boarders can purchase.

Sleeping accommodation in each of the boarding houses is provided in a variety of bedrooms, for example, single bedrooms with en-suite facilities and shared double or triple bedrooms without en-suite facility. There are lounges, rest and study areas and kitchens and kitchenettes in all boarding houses. All are of a good standard of furnishing and décor. There are a sufficient number of showers, bathrooms and toilets in each boarding house. Boarders felt that there is always enough hot water and that their rooms are warm.

Boarders bring their own personal requisites and toiletries and the boarding houses keep stocks of these should boarders run out.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity in the school is outstanding. This is evidenced by the freedom of access by both genders to the sporting, leisure and recreational facilities within the school and the social engagement of boys and girls in all aspects of school life. The religious observance, although Christian based, includes respecting the various faiths of young people attending the school. For example, the chaplain organises evening meetings for groups of distinct faiths, the catering service occasionally offers a multicultural cuisine, and the school welcomes boarders from numerous countries and religious faiths. The school has clearly written policies on equal opportunities, which include content on disability, gender equality and racial equality. There is an accessibility policy which aims to ensure that people with disabilities, both boarders and staff, have equal access to the school. There were many examples of the celebration of multicultural events and the school has a multicultural association which meets regularly. The school hosts annual events for disabled people and makes open the school's resources for these groups.

The school has an array of general information documentation available to parents, pupils and boarders which identify key service leaders within the school and which clearly outline the school's principles, policies and procedures; these are frequently monitored and updated. It was stated earlier in this report that the contact details of Ofsted are not contained within this documentation.

The school has a generic risk assessment in place for areas around the campus which may constitute a risk. However, there are no risk assessments in place which specifically relate to areas of standing water and drainage ditches. Also, activities within the boarding houses such as weekend trips, which have been risk assessed are not reviewed and monitored each term. A critical incident checklist has been produced by the school which stands as its disaster recovery plan. The bursar advised that this is currently being reviewed and updated.

Boarders are generally well supervised by a dedicated and well trained staff group both within and outside of the school site. However, there was some lack of supervision of pupils in the sports changing room before matches.

Each member of the boarding staff has a job description that outlines their duties, role and responsibility, and they are subject to biannual personal development appraisals. There is a clear induction process in place for each member of staff. There is ongoing training for staff on key skills necessary to ensure good practice. Staff have the opportunity to undertake professional development courses in boarding. There are discrepancies and some inconsistency in the principles and practices within boarding houses, most notably in the recording of sanctions applied.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that information documents on the school's complaints procedure advise stakeholders of the contact details of Ofsted (breach of national minimum standard 5.4)
- ensure that adequate written plans are kept of individual boarder's health and welfare needs, where these are identified as being necessary (breach of national minimum standard 17.2)
- ensure that medication administration records are kept under conditions which ensure their confidentiality (breach of national minimum standard 7.5)
- ensure that all boarding houses carry out and record routine fire safety checks and drills (breach of national minimum standard 26.1)
- ensure that the school has in place a signed parental agreement to allow the school to access emergency medical treatment for a boarder (breach of national minimum standard 15.14)
- ensure that the school has a written agreement in place with adults not employed by the school but living in the same building as boarding accommodation (breach of national minimum standard 39.4)
- ensure that the areas around the school where there is standing water and drainage ditches, have been appropriately risk assessed (breach of national minimum standard 47.9)
- ensure that the duties and responsibilities of prefects are clearly stated in writing and that they have received training in this function (breach of national minimum standard 13.3)

- ensure that the discrepancies in the principles and practices within boarding houses regarding the recording of sanctions applied, be addressed. (breach of national minimum standard 10.4)
- ensure that records of sanctions and risk-assessed activities are reviewed and monitored twice each term (breach of national minimum standard 23.2)